

BELIEVING TO SEE

NO. 766

A SERMON
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.”
Psalm 27:13.*

I HAVE taken the whole verse for my text, but I am not sure that I shall keep to it. The words in it at which I catch are these, “Unless I had believed to see.” Most people see to believe, but in David’s case the process was reversed, and put into gospel order: he believed to see; and this is the keynote of our discourse. The prayer of my heart is, that some may be led to believe to see, and that those who have been trying to see in order to believe, may now come and trust in Jesus, and believe and see the grace of God.

Here we have in the words I select for the text, *a doctrine stated, many difficulties removed, and some directions afforded* for the Christian life.

I. We have here before us a fundamental truth of God and DOCTRINE of our faith, that *the great act by which a man is saved, so far as he is concerned, is the act of faith*. That is to say, he gives up all other righteousness, and casts himself upon the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. The moment he does that, he is saved; his past sins are forgiven him; his future is secure. That one simple act of confidence in Jesus, insignificant as it may appear to be, is the dawn of spiritual life, the evidence of security, the token of eternal salvation. And here is the reason for this, namely, that faith is God’s appointed mark which He sets upon His favored ones, and by this may a man know whether he is saved or not, whether he is ordained unto eternal life or not, by his answer to this one question—“Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ?” Or, in other words, “Do you trust in the Son of God?”

The case is ordered in this wise—we have sinned, we have broken God’s law—God’s law must be honored. Sin cannot be committed without a penalty being inflicted. The Lord Jesus Christ determined and stipulated in the covenant of grace, that He would take upon Himself the form of man, and that He would suffer for the chosen many, even for His people, what they had deserved to suffer themselves on account of their sins, or a punishment that would be equivalent to that suffering. In due time the Lord Jesus Christ appeared; true to His word of promise He went up to Calvary—there He received at God’s hands that which was due from His people to the great offended judge. There He paid their debts. There, once and for all, He took the handwriting of ordinances that was against them, and put it away, nailing it to His cross. Now, virtually, all for whom Christ died were then saved; their debts were then paid; their punishment was then discharged. The debt due to the sovereign justice of God was then altogether borne, and Jesus Christ, then and there, “finished transgression, made an end of sin, and brought in an everlasting righteousness” for His people. This man, by His one offering, has perfected forever them who were set apart. Once yielding His soul unto death, and giving Himself up as a sacrifice for men, He then and there saved His people as before the bar of God. These saved ones are known by their being brought to trust in Him; as their once dead but now ever-living Lord. Without faith in Christ, my hearer, you have no share in His blood; you have no interest in His righteousness. What He did upon the cross will have nothing to do in saving you. All His griefs, and groans, and pangs, you will have no share in. Your debts remain unpaid. Your punishment has not been borne for you. You will have to endure the wrath of God forever.

In the prison of hell you will be forever bound in chains of fire. Inasmuch as you have not believed, you have no share in the atonement of Jesus Christ. But if you have come and trusted yourself with Christ, if, fully convinced that there is salvation nowhere else, you believe in Him, then your debts are paid. The punishment of your sin has been endured. You can never suffer, for God cannot punish two

for one offense. You can never be summoned to God's bar to be tried for your life. You are clear. Through Jesus' blood you are ransomed; you are justified, accepted, adopted, saved. Who shall lay anything to your charge, seeing that Christ has died for you, and made a propitiation for your sin? Now the whole of this hinges upon a man's believing; if he believes, then the great gospel truth is *that he is saved*. Throughout the entire Bible this is the one ray of light that comes out of the darkness to poor troubled man. "He who believes on Him is not condemned." "He who believes on Him has everlasting life." "He who believes and is baptized shall be saved." These assertions occur over, and over, and over again, so that I may safely say that this is *the* gospel—that he who believes is saved, and that the faith by which he lays hold of Christ, is to him proof positive that he is saved. He has God's word for it that he is redeemed in Christ.

II. We have now briefly stated the doctrine, but the main part of my subject will be to try and remove those many DIFFICULTIES which people newly awakened and quickened are sure to raise. The doctrine is, that he who believes is saved; but men ask a thousand questions about it, and see as many more difficulties—let us therefore try to meet and answer some of them.

1. And, first, how often do we hear it said, "I cannot think that I am saved; I do not trust in Jesus Christ—I am sure of it, and fear I am not saved, *because I feel no worthiness in me.*" This is a difficulty which we can slay at once. If you did feel any worthiness in yourself, then you might rest assured that you were not saved; because nothing is clearer in God's word than the fact that salvation is not by merit but by divine grace. The apostle Paul is very clear upon this point. He says, "It is not by works, but of grace;" and if any say, it may be partly of each, he says, "No; if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it is of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work." Salvation is altogether, from first to last, a gratuitous act of GRACE; hence you do not need to look for any merit in yourself.

The case is parallel with this—it is sometimes the custom, when a new king attains to the throne, for a general amnesty to be proclaimed, and for all the prison doors to be opened. This is done, of course, not on account of the *merit* of the prisoners, but to do honor to the great mercy of the king. Now, I think I see you, troubled one, sitting as a prisoner in a cell, and the door is opened to you, and you are told that you are free, because the king would honor the day of his coronation; but you reply, "I cannot believe that I am free, *for I do not feel that I deserve it*; the sentence which was passed upon me was one which I richly deserved and according to justice; I cannot, therefore, walk through that prison door, because I know that I have done nothing to merit my discharge." But, man, if the ground of your discharge is not in any degree your merit, but only to the honor of the king, how simple-minded you are to sit on that stone slab any longer! Up with you, man! Walk out; take your liberty, and do honor to the king's bounty! O sinner, you have no merit, that is true, but God forgives you to the praise and glory of His grace, to the honor of His dear Son, to give Him a coronation. Come, then, walk out at liberty!

Or it is as though this should happen—someone who has consumption has applied for admission to enter, say into Brampton Hospital. By-and-by this person obtains the order, but no sooner does she get it than she is afraid to use it. She does not dare go to the hospital, and why? "Because," she says, "*I am not in good health.*" Now, we answer at once, "But if you were in good health, you would have no need of a hospital; it is, in fact, your sickness and your bad health which give you any right to enter there." So, when you tell me that you have no merit, my reply is, but if you had any, you would not need a Savior! Your demerit renders yours a suitable case to be met with by the merit of the Savior. It is your *sinner-ship* which, if there is any fitness, is your fitness. Not your righteousness, sinner, but your guilt must be your plea when you wish to be pardoned. If money is to be given away, men do not urge their being possessed of riches as a reason why they should receive the charity, but one cries, "I am exceedingly poor," and another says, "I am poorer still." It is their poverty, not their substance, which is their plea with the generous heart. And so it is between God and you. Not your fullness, but your emptiness; not your goodness, but your badness; not your merit, but your demerit; these you must plead before God, seeing that salvation is by grace.

Now, then, what do you say, sinner? God tells you that if you believe in Christ, you are saved. Is God a liar or not? I must push that with you. Does God speak truth or not? As for this trumpery objec-

tion of yours, that you have no merit, I have shown you that it is without a foundation, for if you had any merit, then why should you come to God for mercy? But, meritless, worthless, altogether without any goodness, still the text says, “Blessed is he who works not, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly.” What do you say—will you take God at His word, and believe what He says to be true?

2. But I hear another objection, one which is very frequently made indeed. Someone says, “*But I want to see* in myself the evidences of salvation; I know that when a man is saved, there very soon appear in his character certain signs and tokens which mark the work of the Holy Spirit, and I cannot believe that I am saved on the mere word of God; I want to see the evidences of it.” I will tell you a story then. When the Emperor Napoleon the First, was one day reviewing his troops on what is now called the *Place de la Concorde*, sitting on his horse, and thinking of other things, he let go of the bridle, and in a moment his high spirited charger galloped away with him. A private in the ranks saw the danger, rushed from his place, seized the bridle, and saved the life of the emperor, who said to him, “Thank you, *Captain*,” and went on. “Of what regiment, sire?” asked the soldier. “Of my guards,” was the reply. Now, it was a strange thing that the Emperor should in a moment make him a captain for so small an act as that, and stranger still that the man should so simply and fully believe him as not to doubt for a minute, but ask at once of what regiment he was to be the captain. Now, what do you suppose the soldier did? Going back to his regiment, he put down his gun, and said, “Whoever likes may take care of that,” and walking across the review ground up to the staff, he joined with them. A general looking round at him said, “What does that fellow want?” “That fellow is a captain of the guard,” said the man, and gave the military salute. “You are mad, friend!” “I am not mad; I am a captain of the guard.” “Who said so?” “He said so,” pointing to the Emperor riding along. “I beg your pardon,” replied the general, and recognized him at once in his new office. The man took the Emperor at his word. He wore no shoulder ornaments; he was not adorned with any gold lace; he had not received any of a captain’s pay; he had passed through no formal ceremony; but the Emperor had simply called him “captain,” and that was enough for him.

Now, I want to know whether the Lord Jesus Christ’s word is not as well worth taking as the word of the Emperor Napoleon. When he says to you, “believe; he who believes has everlasting life,” the proper way for you to act is to feel and say, “That is true; I have everlasting life; although, as yet, I have not a jot of evidence of any other kind; yet if He has said it, that is enough for me. Though I may have come in here an ungodly, unconverted sinner, yet, since I have learned to trust the Savior this night, and do trust him, then I am saved, I will try to get these evidences by-and-by.” I have no doubt that that soldier I told you of very soon began to look after his uniforms. He would not like to continue dressed as a private after that, but would want an officer’s uniform, and to appear in the army as a captain should appear. And so will it be with you by-and-by; but at first, my dear friends, your faith must be grounded on the word of Jesus Christ, and on nothing else. Perhaps the devil will say to you, “What is that fellow doing here?” Tell the devil and all his angels, “HE said it who died on the cross! HE said it who reigns in heaven, that ‘Whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life.’” Stand to it, that if He said it, that is enough. You have the King’s word for it; the imperial word, the word of the blessed and only Potentate who cannot lie.

So, then, it is sufficient evidence to the believing heart that it has God’s word to rely upon. Let me point you to the 36th verse of the third chapter of John: “He who believes on the Son has everlasting life.” And to the 18th verse of the same chapter, “He who believes on Him is not condemned.” Are not these words quite sufficient, though as yet no other evidence can be seen? But sometimes I have heard persons saying, “Well, but we must have evidences; we cannot trust Christ without them.” And consequently they try to manufacture signs of grace, whereas, be it never forgotten, that *evidences are the product of faith, and not the cause of faith*. You go into a room at winter time, and you say to yourself, “There is not enough heat in this room; I must try to make it warmer,” and you set to work, by some plan or other, to do this. You say there is no evidence of there being a fire because there is no heat; true, but you will never make the heat *produce* the fire. Would it not be much better to go and look to the fire at once? And then you would get the heat which is the *result* of a fire. So you say, “I am not so earnest, so reverent, so prayerful, so penitent as I should be, therefore I cannot believe.” Now, would it not be

better to say, “If I believed more, I would have more of these evidences; therefore let me go to my faith, which is the cause of the evidences, and not go to my evidences to get faith out of them”?

It is as though you had a piece of ground, and you said to yourself, “Well, now, here are these trees; they produce very little fruit—if I could secure a large crop, that would be evidence that the soil is good. I must put fresh fruit on the trees, and then that will prove that the ground is fertile.” Not at all! Make the soil good, and then the fruit will come naturally. So with your faith; faith is the soil in which the fruits of faith must grow. Do not be thinking about the evidences. Think about the faith that will grow the evidences. Seek to go to Christ, and trust in Him, and you will get the signs of divine grace soon enough. Your main business is with Jesus, not with evidences. Rest in Him—His finished work and ascension power—and, if you depend there, without evidences, you will soon have plenty of them; but, if you look to external or other signs in order to get faith, you look, as I have already told you, in the wrong place, and reverse the order of grace. To use an old proverb you “put the cart before the horse.” You do not go logically and properly to work. Trust in Christ for evidences, and you will have plenty of them in due time.

3. Commonly enough we hear people say, “*I need to have a deeper repentance, and then I could believe that I am saved.*” Christ says, “He who believes is saved.” You say, “Well, that is what Christ says, but I am not satisfied with that.” Oh, atrocious thing! To make Christ a liar and suspect His word! Still, you say you need a deeper repentance. Now, you are very like a man who is in a high fever, and delirious, and he cries out, “I need to feel that I am in this fever; I need to know the top and the bottom of this typhus; I need to know when it goes, and how it will go.” But the doctor says, “Never mind, my dear friend; never mind the typhus; just trust to me; take the medicine.” He calms the man’s mind by reminding him that if he had not the typhus, he would not need the doctor; but now that the fever is there, it is not for him to know the disease so much as to trust the remedy; and when he gets well, he will understand about it better. So, poor sinner, till you have come to Christ, your repentance is not worth a penny! If you had a ton weight of it, your repentance would be of no value till you trusted Jesus! We must get you well first, and then you shall know about the disease. Trust Jesus, and believe His word, and do not, in your delirium, be looking for those dark experiences which would not comfort you, though you think they would.

There is a man who has written a very offensive letter to a very kind friend who has often obliged him. This friend, when he received the letter, said, “Well, it was very wrong of you to write this letter, but I freely forgive you.” But the other said, “I do not think my friend has forgiven me, because I do not feel regretful enough; if I felt more repentant, then I should think that he had forgiven me.” As if his friend’s forgiveness were not quite well enough assured to him by his friend’s word! But now, supposing that man should bring himself to believe that his friend had forgiven him? Why, then he would find it an easy matter to repent, because he would say to himself, “Has my friend been kind enough to overlook so great a fault? Then how wrong it was of me to have written so against him! How grieved, how shocked I am to think that I should have fallen into such an offense against so generous a friend!” My dear hearers, you cannot get repentance by refusing to believe Christ’s word. Trust Him! Trust Him, and believe that you are saved, and then the sluices will be drawn up, and you will repent. You will see Jesus Christ dying that you might live, and you will ask, “Did I slaughter that blessed Savior; did I wound Him; did I scourge Him, and put Him to death? Then monstrous sins, away with you, away with you!” You must first believe, and then repentance will come—not look to repentance as being the evidence, but look to Jesus, and to Jesus only, and, looking to Him, repentance will follow as a matter of course.

4. Then, running to the other extreme, we have heard many troubled ones say, “I cannot think that I am saved *because I do not feel great joy*; if I had greater joy, then I would know that I was forgiven.” Somebody has left you a large estate, and you say to yourself, “Well, I have just read the letter in which the lawyer tells me that I am left a large estate, but, somehow or other, I do not believe it, for if it were true, I should feel greater joy about it.” Why, you talk like a fool, sir! If you believed it, you would feel joy. It is because you do not believe it that you do not have joy. You turn the thing upside down, and want your joy to help your faith, whereas your joy must flow from your faith, and cannot possibly contribute to it. So, man, if you will come and trust my Lord’s word, and believe that you are saved because

you trust Him, then you will have joy. You cannot be without joy. If you believed tonight that your sins were pardoned, would you not be glad? Certainly you would! Well, then, believe it. If you are trusting Christ, if you are resting wholly upon Jesus, He tells you that you are saved. Do not begin to say, "I have not the bliss I hoped to have." You shall have that joy when you have looked for it, and have looked alone to Christ.

5. Then, I have known others who have said, "I could believe that I am saved if *I had more sanctification*." That also is the wrong way to go to work. In a sweet little book which I have read lately, the writer well remarks, "Suppose you were in Brazil, and you were in some of those brooks where diamonds are occasionally picked up, and you found a large unpolished one; no matter how rough it might be, if you knew it to be a diamond, you would get it polished; but if you had any suspicion about it, you would not be likely to incur the expense and trouble of polishing it. It is your assurance of its being a diamond that would set you to work to take it to the lapidary to have it put upon a seal, and set." So we find salvation, and when we get it, it is a rough, uncouth thing. We need to have it, as we say, sanctified. Now, if we believe it is a diamond, if we believe that it is really and truly salvation, we shall then be in earnest to get that salvation perfected, to have the diamond's facets all made to glitter in the light of heaven. But so long as we have any doubts about the matter, we shall not think, nor be troubled, about perfecting our salvation. The fact is, that strong faith is the great sanctifying agent through the Power of the Holy Spirit, and the application of the precious blood of Jesus. You will never overcome your sins by doubting Christ. You will never get sanctification by putting your holiness into the place of Christ's righteousness. It is no faith to believe that I am saved being sanctified; but it is faith to believe that I, being sanctified, and with all my sins about me, am still saved through the precious blood of Jesus. O sinner, do not look to sanctification to back up the testimony of God's word. God's word is enough! O take it; rest upon it. Remember, you dishonor God when you need any other evidence except His naked word. What would you, dear friends, think of this in your own case? You promise your child a present, and he wants evidences. You tell him that you love him, and he wants you to call to him somebody else to bear witness to it. Shame on your naughty child, or else there must be something ill about yourself. Now, as we cannot lay the blame on our heavenly Father, who is too wise to err, too good to be unkind, shame on us that we should be saying we need something else to make us believe God's word. O beloved, let us believe Him when we cannot see it; and if we do not feel that we are saved, let us believe the word which says we are, seeing it is the word of Christ. I like that in Martin Luther. He says the devil said to him once, "Martin, do you feel that you are saved?" "No, I do not," he said, "but I am quite as sure of it as if I did; get you behind me, Satan!" And that is the true way. Do you feel that you are saved? No, I do not expect to feel it; it is a matter of belief. I trust my Lord and Master. It is very sweet to get feelings; but Mr. Live-by-Feeling, as you well remember, according to John Bunyan, was a Diabolian, and was hanged. I wish he had been hanged to better purpose, for he still lives about these parts. If you live by feeling, it is miserable living. It is poverty sometimes, and riches at others. But if you live by faith upon the Son of God, who loved you, and gave Himself for you, that is blessed living! O for divine grace to do this, not to see to believe, but to believe to see! Put believing first, and repentance, sanctification, evidences and all else, will come afterwards.

6. I shall not weary you, I hope, if I mention that there are some who say they cannot trust Christ, cannot believe His affirmation that they are saved, *because they do not feel more love for Him*. They are like a child who should say, "I do not believe my father's word because I do not feel so much love for him as I ought to do." Oh, but, my Child, if you believed your father's word, a true and good love would come as the consequence! And, sinner, while you are saying, "I cannot believe because I cannot love," you are putting things altogether out of gear. That is neither God's method nor the way of wisdom at all. Go, and believe your Father, and then you shall feel a flame of love within your heart which you have never known before.

7. But another one says, "I could believe that I were saved if *I had more of likeness to Christ about me*." Here again, you see, Christ has said, "He who believes has everlasting life," and you say, "No, Lord, I do not agree with that, I believe that he who is like You has everlasting life, and I cannot see that I am like You, though I once hoped I would be; and therefore I cannot think that I am saved." That is to

say, Christ and you differ in opinion, and you set your, “No,” up against Christ’s, “Yes.” Oh, down, down, down with your proud, “No,” and just take this sweet assurance, that “He who believes on Him is not condemned!” Now, here is a man who has been cutting a seal, and making your crest, but when you come to stamp your letters with it, you find that the impression is very bad, that it is not your crest at all. You cannot make out what it is. It may be a crest, but it is not at all like one. Well, what will you do? Will you try to polish up your wax, and so make the impression like what you wanted it to be? Would it not be a great deal wiser if you were to get the seal altered? Would not that set it all right directly? If you were to send the seal back to the man who cut the die, and get him to make the seal properly, would not the stamp then be right? Now, how do we get likeness to Christ? Why, it is faith which puts the stamp there, and instead of saying, “The impression upon my character is not like Christ, therefore I must try to alter it,” my dear friend, think about your faith; go to Christ, and through Him get your faith altered; and when the stamp is set right, then the impression will be perfect. There is no holiness, no true holiness apart from faith. It is not by doubting that we come to be holy. I never could overcome a sin by saying, “I am afraid I am not a child of God.” The devil knows this, and consequently whenever he can get us alone, he always begins with this, “If you are the son of God.” He did this with our Lord, and if he could have led our Lord to doubt whether He was God’s Son, we know not what might have come of it, for certainly when he gets us to doubt whether we are children of God, then we very soon glide into other sins. But when we can say to him, “Now, Satan, I am not ignorant of your devices; I know you are about to tell me of my unfaithfulness and of my great sin; I know all that, but the blood of Jesus Christ, God’s dear Son, cleanses me from all sin; you may paint me as filthy as yourself, and filthier, too, if it so pleases you, and I will acknowledge that it is true; but then I will remind you that Christ has said, ‘I have blotted out your sins like a cloud, and like a thick cloud your transgressions.’” Why, you are more than a match for the devil then!

O brothers and sisters let us take Christ’s word as we find it. I bring you back to the story I told you about the Emperor and the soldier; and seeing He has said that we are saved, let us believe we are. If we have nothing else to prove it, let us stand to it before angels and devils, the assembled courts of heaven and of hell, all joined together, and say, “I have God’s word for it, and I would put God’s word even before an angel’s word; if Christ has said I am saved, then I am saved; if He has declared that the believer has eternal life, I do believe; I do trust in Jesus, and therefore I have eternal life, and I cannot perish; neither can anyone pluck me out of Christ’s hands.” Now, that is the gospel of Jesus Christ. I would to God you had grace to receive it! I pray that every one of us may be brought to depend upon the veracity of God and the merit of Jesus, and then, believing to see, instead of seeing to believe, we shall be sustained, and comforted, and greatly blessed.

III. And now I have a FEW DIRECTIONS TO GIVE TO MORE ADVANCED BELIEVERS upon the same subject.

Beloved in the Lord, *the whole course of the Christian’s life must be believing to see.* We walk by faith, and not by sight. I hope the day may soon come when the noble example which has been set by our esteemed brother, Mr. Muller, of Bristol, will be more constantly followed in the entire Lord’s work; for rest assured, that if we will but believe to see, we shall see great things. I cannot forbear mentioning to you tonight what God has enabled us to see of late as a church. We met together one Monday night, as you will remember, for prayer concerning the Orphanage, and it was not a little remarkable that, on the Saturday of that week, God should have moved some friend who knew nothing of our prayers, to give 500 pounds to that cause. It astonished some of you that, on the following Monday, God should have moved another to give 600 pounds! When I told you of that at the next prayer meeting, you did not think, perhaps, that God had something else in store, and the following Tuesday another friend came with 500 pounds! It was just the same in the building of this house. We were a few and poor people when we commenced, but still we moved on by faith, and never went into debt. We trusted in God, and the Tabernacle was built, to the eternal honor of the God who hears and answers prayer. And, mark you, it will be so in the erection of this Orphan House. We shall see greater things than these if only our faith will precede our sight. But if we go upon the old custom of our general societies, and first look out for regular income, and get our subscribers, and send round our collectors, and pay our percentages—that is,

do not trust God, but trust our subscribers—if we go on that rule, we shall see very little, and have no room for believing. But if we shall just trust God, and believe that God never did leave a work that He put us upon, and never sets us to do a thing without meaning to help us through with it, we shall soon see that the God of Israel lives, and that His arm is not shortened that He cannot save, neither is His ear heavy that He cannot hear. Brothers and sisters let us remember Israel when they came to the Red Sea. There it was, a roaring, billowy sea; but they were bid to march through it, and they did march; and though the waters roared before them fiercely, yet as soon as the priests' feet touched the flood, the depths stood upright on a heap, and the waters were congealed in the heart of the sea. And so shall it be with you, brothers and sisters, and with your faith. Believe in God, and face your difficulties, and they shall flee before you. Then, remember the Egyptians. They decided to do the same thing. They thought, "Oh, that is all right; we will do as these have done before us." But notice, they said this because all their difficulties had been cleared away. There was the Red Sea all dry before them. Any fool could march through there! But, unfortunately, while faith can march through a sea dry-shod, unbelief only begins to march when it is all dry, and presently, unbelief gets drowned. Unbelief needs to see, and God strikes it blind. Faith does not need to see, and God opens its eyes, and it sees God, ever present to help and deliver it. Now, you who are working for Christ, and you who are troubled in your business, you who are in any way challenged, remember the life of faith. Remember that you are not called to walk by sight, but by faith! Like David, believe to see, and great shall be your joy.

Now, beloved Christian brothers and sisters, *the same thing must happen in our inward conflicts*. If we want to grow in divine grace, we shall not do so by humbling ourselves, as we call it. The way to make advances in divine life is to believe that you can only grow in grace by God's Spirit; to believe that since Jesus Christ is yours, all things are yours. My brother, my sister, have you a bad temper? You will never overcome that temper by saying, "I cannot overcome it." But if, by faith, you are able to say, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me," you will overcome it yet. No sin is ever slain by your saying, "Oh, it is my disposition; it is *natural* to me." I know it is, and all manner of wickedness is natural to us, but you have to rest upon a supernatural arm—you are a twice-born man. You are a new creature, and you must not sit down in peace in any form of sin, but believe that you can overcome it by the power of your faith, and of the Holy Spirit that is in you. Believe, in order to see yourselves growing in grace; believe, to see yourselves conquering sin in the name of Christ, and you shall do so.

And again, with regard to *our perplexities in doctrines and matters of faith*, you must apply the same rule. Believe first, and then you will see the truth as it is in Jesus. How often the Christian comes across a passage of Scripture which seems to be dark and mysterious. He cannot for a time understand its preciousness, nor behold its beauty; but though he cannot see the golden ore, he knows that it is there; and, like one who searches for gold amidst the nuggets of quartz where it is embedded, in due time he will be enriched. It will not do to cast it away because nothing at present is seen; for before long the full value of it shall be known. The Christian drinks water from a well which is deep and by nothing but faith's long arm can reach down so as to draw the living water. It is no surface supply which will do for us; down deep in the depths of God's spiritual truths, where no hand of reason can reach, we can let down our faith, and the clear, fresh water will be drawn up to refresh our thirsty souls. If ever you are in a difficulty, bring faith to bear upon the truth of God first, and you will understand and see afterwards. It depends upon which end of the telescope you use first and put to your eye, how much you will see of the landscape; and the lengths and breadths of the truth of God are only discovered when faith is first of all brought into exercise.

Remember, moreover, my beloved brothers and sisters that our *only safeguard in times of prosperity* is to exercise faith beforehand. Our text says, "I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living." Expect great things from God, work for them, and believe that God intends to do good to you. David was not taken by surprise when he saw God's goodness. He had always believed in it; and when the full tide of divine beneficence met his view he was not overcome, for he always, by faith, comprehended it. You, my brothers and sisters, now high up in the mountain, still let your faith lead your eye upwards and you will not grow giddy and fall. Walk by faith, and you will find yourself safe alike in trouble and in joy. In the night of adversity it will be as a pillar of fire to give you

light, and in the daytime it will refresh you with its sheltering shade all through the wilderness. Believe, and you shall see without fainting, “the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.”

And once more, beloved, we are on our journey to the skies. We are on our way to heaven, and if we want to have a foretaste of it, how shall we get it? We must not believe in heaven only because we have had enjoyments on the road—we *must believe that there is a heaven because God has promised it*, and we must go after it because the word declares there is a great reward; and there, if we believe to see, we shall, even in this life, soon see something of that which we have believed.

Brothers and sisters, we are tonight like Columbus in search of the New World. Eye has not seen it, ear has not heard it; but we believe in it, and in our frail vessels we have launched, leaving the world behind us. Unbelief sometimes tells us that there is no goodly country, no land of life-unending, no city of the blessed, no haven of peace, no “Jerusalem the golden.” We have never seen it, but we believe in it. God has said it in His word—“There remains therefore a rest for the people of God.” Therefore, up with all sail! Steersman, hold to the wheel! We are bound for another and a better land. We have no abiding city on that shore which we have left. If we were mindful of it, we might return to it; but we have left it once and for all, and we are now steering for the land which eye has not seen. And you know what happened to Columbus. It is happening to some here—to some of my gray-headed brothers and sisters. Ah, and young as I am, I also know something of that which I am about to describe. When Columbus was drawing near to the shores of America, though he could not see the land, yet he marked the land birds flying round and round the masts, and lighting upon the cordage of the vessels, and he pointed up and said, “That is a bird that is not seen far out at sea; there is land somewhere!” His companions had been ready to throw him overboard, and make back for Spain; but they thought better of it now. And by-and-by there came floating along weeds and branches of land produce, and they said, “Ah, after all, the old-fashioned navigator is right. We shall come to the land of gold!”

Now sometimes God gives us blessed foretastes, happy earnest, delightful tokens, that there is a better land, till some of us, having believed to see, are almost come to see. I envy some of my dear friends who have been long in the divine life, and are getting gray, because I know that the angels often bring them bundles from the hills of myrrh, and make glad their spirits with tastes of the wines on the lees well refined, which are reserved for the feasts of the immortals when they sit down in the banquet-halls of the eternal, and see the King in His beauty, and bask in the vision of His glory. Oh, let us go on, we who are younger, who have scarcely begun the voyage, knowing that all is well! Storms may toss us about; waves may dash against our hull; the billows may seem as if about to swallow us up. But our fathers have gained the beach. Their ships, like those of Columbus, are drawn up on yonder shore. They are safe and blessed. Listen! We can almost hear their song. Their, “Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! for the Lord God omnipotent reigns!” might almost be heard even here, were not this earth so full of noise, were not the whirl of the wheels of business so incessant. Let us, then, O let us believe to see, and we shall soon see it, and glorify Him who taught us so to believe. May God bless you, dear friends, very richly in this believing to see, for Jesus Christ’s sake. Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—JOHN 3:14-36.

Adapted from *The C. H. Spurgeon Collection*, Version 1.0, Ages Software.

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